NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD AND SPECIFICATIONS

RECREATION TRAIL AND WALKWAY

(feet)
CODE 568

DEFINITION

A pathway for pedestrian, equestrian, bicycle, and other off-road modes of travel through or to recreation resources.

PURPOSES

This practice may be applied as part of a resource management system to support one or more of the following purposes:

* Provide or improve recreation access.
* Provide travelways for recreational activities such as walking, horseback riding, bicycling, and hiking.
* Direct travelaway from ecologically sensitive and/or erosion prone areas.
* Minimize on-site and off-site damage to resources during periods of access.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On land areas where prepared paths, trails, and walkways are needed for effective and safe access to or through recreation resources.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

All planned work shall comply with federal, state, local, and tribal lows and regulations.

Plants, landscaping materials, traffic control measures, wooden walkways, grades, etc. shall be evaluated for effectiveness, aesthetics, and accessibility.

The trail or walkway shall be conducive to the overall recreation area and aesthetically blend with the general landscape and surroundings.

The trail or walkway shall be configured to minimize adverse on-site and off-site impacts such as accelerated erosion, riparian zone degradation, stream channel and streambank damage, hydrology modification, other water resource damage, aesthetics, or unacceptable damage to wildlife habitat, fragmentation, or restriction of wildlife movement.

Visual resources: Special attention shall be given to saving and maintaining key trees and other vegetation that have scenic value, provide shade, reduce erosion and runoff, provide den and food for wildlife, or add to the visual quality of the area. Route trails to take advantage of pleasing views.

Grade: Sustained grades shall be dictated by good judgment for the purpose intended, considering the topography, and shall not exceed 10 percent. Grades up to 15 percent for distances of 200 feet or less are acceptable for pedestrian and equestrian trails. Steps should be provided on steep pedestrian trails and walkways.

Bicycle trail grades should average 3 percent or less. Maximum sustained grade is 4 percent and grades up to 8 percent may be used for short distances.

Erosion control or water diversions shall be required on grades that are erosive.

Width: The minimum tread width shall be 4 feet. Wider trails would be desired if the anticipated use is heavy enough to warrant the additional installation cost. The width in cuts for pedestrian

trails may be reduced to 3 feet if a greater width would increase the cost materially or adversely affect environmentally sensitive areas.

All trees, shrubs, and fallen timber shall be removed for the specified width. Stumps shall be cut as close to the ground as possible. All protruding limbs shall be removed for a distance of 2 feet on each side of the trail and to the height specified.

Side slopes: Cut and fill slopes shall be stable for the soil or soil material.

Drainage: Drainage measures shall be of sufficient size, intervals and gradient to ensure adequate drainage. A raised or elevated trail or walkway may be required for wet sites that cannot be drained.

Erosion control: Plans shall include provisions for control of erosion. Disturbed areas shall be established in vegetation as soon as practicable after construction. If soil or climatic conditions preclude the use of vegetation and protection is needed, non-vegetative means, such as mulches or gravel, may be used. Seedbed preparation, seeding, fertilizing, and mulching shall comply with the CRITICAL AREA PLANTING (342) conservation practice standard.

Use vegetation adapted to the site that will accomplish the desired purpose. Preference shall be given to native plant species. If native plant materials are not adaptable or have not proven effective for the planned use, then non-native species may be used.

Bridges: Bridges shall be designed for the maximum expected loading with an adequate factor of safety.

Surfacing: If surfacing is required for a firm trail, the surfacing material may be pit or creek-run gravel, concrete, asphalt, or other material that can withstand the anticipated traffic and the operational conditions at the site.

Safety: Safety of the users shall be incorporated into the design. Adequate directional and warning signs, handrails, bridges, and culverts shall be placed as dictated by the site and intended use. Protection from slides and falling rocks shall be provided, where needed.

General: Equestrian and pedestrian trails may vary from specific grades, widths, and clearing requirements if so dictated by location and topography.

All drainage, erosion control structures, bridges or other structural features shall be in accordance with accepted practices and shall be designed in accordance with appropriate Engineering Standards, Handbooks, and NRCS procedures.

All undesirable material such as soil high in organic matter, stumps, and large stones shall be removed from the tread area of the trail.

Construction operations shall be carried out in such a manner that erosion, dust, and sedimentation are minimized and held to acceptable limits.

CONSIDERATIONS

Accessibility by all users should be considered. Develop facilities that are accessible to individuals with physical disabilities wherever feasible. Use the guidance of the Americans with Disabilities Act where appropriate.

Assure safe ingress and egress to the trail or walkway. Assure adequate parking for users and an operation and maintenance staging area.

Consider adjoining land uses and the proximity to residences, utilities, cultural resources, threatened and endangered species of plants and animals, wetlands, important farmlands, or other environmentally sensitive areas and areas of special scenic value.

Consider potential ecological and human impacts when planning a trail for use by motorized vehicles.

If the purpose of the trail or walkway is improvement of water quality, the trail or walkway should be located as far away from the waterbody or watercourse as possible. Any work in and/or discharges near streams, wetlands, or waterbodies may require a permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers, state water quality permitting authority or local authority.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for constructing recreation trails and walkways shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the essential requirements for properly applying the practice to achieve the intended purposes.

Plans and specifications shall include construction plans, drawings, job sheets, or other similar documents. These documents shall specify the requirements for installing the practice including the kind, amount, and quality of materials to be used.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Plan shall be prepared for and reviewed with the landowner or operator.

Provisions shall be made for maintaining all wearing surfaces, signs, and drainage structures.

Repair all erosion and maintain water diversions to control runoff.

Remove all obstacles such as stones and logs to keep the walkway open for travel.